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**ADDRESS BY H.E. MR. NELSON MANDELA, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA, AT THE INAUGURAL CEREMONY ON 27 APRIL 1996**

This great gathering comes at a critical moment as the world faces the challenges of development and world poverty.

For South Africa it is a privilege to host those who played such a vital role in our liberation. It is a special joy, on this second anniversary of our Freedom Day, to wish you all a hearty welcome.

South Africa's liberation has brought the opportunity at last to address apartheid's legacy of poverty and inequality. It has brought propitious circumstances for building a framework for the promotion of sustained growth and balanced development particularly in Southern Africa.

We have no illusions about the immensity of the tasks we face as a country, as a region and as a continent - but we are also confident that we are making progress and learning valuable lessons.

Issues of trade and development affect the whole world, but they do have particular significance for Africa, placed by history and circumstance at the bottom of many a ladder and yet determined to realize the promise of her rebirth.

We therefore thank UNCTAD for choosing our country and our continent of Africa as the location of its Ninth Ministerial Conference.

I would also take this opportunity to thank the Conference for the confidence it has expressed in the South African Government by electing South Africa to the presidency of UNCTAD.

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When world leaders set out three decades ago to create an instrument in UNCTAD to help overcome the inequities in the world economy, they could scarcely have expected that the closing years of the century would be witness to hunger, homelessness and unemployment on such a scale as we now have.

In spite of the immense economic and technological gains that have been made, in spite of the end of the cold war, the reality is that the world at the end of the twentieth century is no more secure a place for most of its inhabitants, as that poverty and need continue to blight their lives.

Though these scourges are with us still, in other respects we find ourselves in a world radically changed from that in which UNCTAD first defined the particular needs of developing countries.

The old economic and trading blocs which traced the landscape of world trade have changed.

The world trade regime has changed.

Capital movements are freer - and more volatile, as we are experiencing in South Africa at present.

Technology changes at an increasingly rapid pace and on a global scale, inducing rapid change in industrial processes.

These changes bring great opportunities - but also severe challenges and problems. They take on specific and different meanings for powerful players in the global economy and for those without power. Greater market access and free or fair trade are prized in the capitals of the world - but hold no promise for those countries producing few goods and services with which to trade, and with no market power to pursue their interests.

For much of the world, especially the Least Developed Countries, inequities are further compounded by lack of access to instruments that were available to other countries when they were in similar positions. The danger is that, left to its own devices, the current regime can only entrench this inequality and widen the gap between rich and poor nations.

Our mission, therefore, must be shaped by the real needs of those whom history has marginalized. That we cannot leave them to the vagaries of the world economy was precisely the wisdom which informed the founding of UNCTAD.

It is common cause that the United Nations has to restructure itself to meet the demands of the new millennium. In equal measure UNCTAD has to forge for itself a new position in the world economy, in the light of these changes and needs, so that it is equipped to accomplish in the twenty-first century the objectives for which it was established.

Central to that new position, we are convinced, must be a "Partnership for Development", built on the ideas articulated by UNCTAD four years ago.

South Africa's own experience, as we grapple with the task of addressing our own wide disparities of wealth and poverty, highlights in particular three aspects of partnership.

Firstly, the changes in economic and trading groups which have taken place demand more flexible arrangements than a simple relation of developed to developing nation. For example, South Africa's relation to SADC, of fundamental importance to us, is a partnership very different from our partnership with the European Union. As such, each partnership would require attention to particular needs and circumstances.

Secondly, development cannot be the responsibility only of government. Success requires Governments to join hands with their social partners: non-governmental organizations; the private sector; and other parts of civil society.

Lastly, all these partners need to recognize that the potential contribution of the private sector to the development process is very great indeed, whether it is in infrastructure, technological change or human resource development. In this regard they should cooperate in making development an integral part of the pursuit of business, rather than an additional activity which it might or might not engage in.

We are confident that this Conference will strengthen our shared commitment and create the basis for strengthening the worldwide partnership for development; for prosperity and for peace. We believe that it will promote concrete support by UNCTAD for building that partnership as well as for facilitating trade and investment.

We have a shared responsibility to roll back the harsh effects of past policies. And we owe it to future generations not to perpetuate patterns of domination and dependence; of pessimism and crude self-interest. Peace and development are indivisible. Without relief of the poverty which pervades much of the world, our democracy and human rights will for many only be a formality, and always remain in jeopardy.

We are confident that the United Nations, and this Conference in particular, will take the world forward along the road of partnership and responsibility in building just and equitable relations.

I wish you well in your deliberations, and hope you will have a memorable stay in our country.

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